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ABSTRACT

Although competency-based adult education (CBAE) has been practiced by teachers for centuries, the term was defined more fully and formal programs were developed around 1971. One of the prime forces in the growth of CBAE was the Adult Performance Level (APL) project at the University of Texas, a project that defined CBAE and produced suggested categories of the skills needed for adult functional literacy. Research through the years produced a list of characteristics of competency-based instruction, including explicit objectives, methods and criteria for achievement; alternative modes for reaching objectives; relevance to job or task analysis; continuous evaluation feedback; and individualized instruction. At present, CBAE is being implemented in some form in at least two-thirds of the states. Many of the programs focus on teaching life-coping skills as well as job skills. In addition, a Federal CBAE network has been established to link practitioners and keep researchers up to date. Today, there is increased recognition of the problem of functional illiteracy in this country, as evidenced by increased media attention, the Secretary of Education's initiative on adult literacy, and the influence of CBAE on the following: (1) vocational, correctional, military, and General Educational Development programs; (2) programs of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education; and (3) products of commercial publishers. (KC)

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Competency-Based Adult Education:

The Past, Present and Future

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Abstract

This topic was the subject of the Keynote Address given by Elaine Shelton on Tuesday, November 29, 1983 at the Eighth National Competency-Based Adult Education Conference held in New York City. One of the four co-sponsors of this Conference was the Adult Competency Education Unit of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. The section on the past includes an historical look at CBAE, roots, definitions, major characteristics and criticism. The present section focuses on CBAE research, program implementation and dissemination. The CBAE future section discusses the resurgence of interest in CBAE as evidenced by increased media attention, the Secretary of Education's initiative on adult literacy and the influence of CBAE on vocational, correctional, military and GED programs as well as the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education and the products of commercial publishers.

COMPETENCY-BASED ADULT EDUCATION:

THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

WHAT I WILL ATTEMPT TO DO THIS MORNING IS TO PROVIDE YOU WITH A MERCIFULLY BRIEF, BROAD BRUSH LOOK AT COMPETENCY-BASED ADULT EDUCATION (CBAE): PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE. I WILL INVARIABLY LEAVE OUT AREAS THAT YOU MAY FEEL SHOULD HAVE BEEN INCLUDED BUT I ASK YOUR INDULGENCE, WITH THE ASSURANCE THAT THE FINER DETAILS WILL BE AMPLY COVERED IN THE CONCURRENT SESSIONS WHICH ARE THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF THE NEXT DAY AND A HALF.

CBAE: THE PAST

SINCE, AS MOST OF YOU ARE AWARE, I WAS A MEMBER OF THE ADULT PERFORMANCE LEVEL (APL) PROJECT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS FOR NEARLY A DECADE, MOST OF YOU ARE EXPECTING ME TO AT LEAST MENTION APL. INDEED, I WOULD BE TOTALLY REMISS IN MY ATTEMPT TO CHRONICLE THE PAST OF CBAE WERE I NOT TO REFERENCE THE APL PROJECT. HOWEVER, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF MAKING IT THE FOCUS OF MY REMARKS TODAY. INSTEAD, SINCE A MENTION OF IT IS PROPER AND NECESSARY, LET ME

GET IT OVER WITH AT THE BEGINNING.

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

"CBAE HAS BECOME THE UMBRELLA TERM FOR PROGRAMS THAT FOCUS ON BOTH AN ADULTS' ACADEMIC SKILL NEEDS AS WELL AS THEIR LIFE, SOCIETAL, SURVIVAL OR COPING SKILL NEEDS."¹ MANY PEOPLE MISTAKENLY ASSUME THAT CBAE BEGAN WITH APL IN 1971. THIS IS SIMPLY NOT SO. THE PROCESS, IF NOT THE NAME, OF CBAE HAD BEEN GOING ON FOR CENTURIES BEFORE APL WAS EVEN A GLEAM IN THE EYE OF THE, THEN, OFFICE OF EDUCATION. GOOD EDUCATORS EVERYWHERE WERE APPLYING THE MAJOR TENETS OF CBAE IN THEIR PRACTICE (RELEVANCY OF CONTENT, STUDENT INPUT, PRESCRIPTION AND INSTRUCTION BASED ON DIAGNOSTIC PRETESTING AND POST TESTING, ETC.) I'LL GET BACK TO THESE MAJOR TENETS IN JUST A VERY FEW MINUTES. JUST LET ME SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT APL, HAVING PREFACED THEM WITH THE REMARK THAT THE BIRTH OF THE PROJECT

¹FROM INTRODUCTION TO RHODE ISLAND CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR ADULT EDUCATORS HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL COMPETENCY-BASED FORMAT

TWELVE YEARS AGO DID NOT HERALD IN CBAE. IT SIMPLY REPRESENTED ONE EXAMPLE OF CBAE. THE THREE PRIME OBJECTIVES OF THE APL RESEARCH WERE: 1) TO IDENTIFY THOSE COMPETENCIES NEEDED BY ADULTS IN ORDER TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN THOSE TASKS THEY WERE TYPICALLY CALLED UPON TO DO EVERY DAY, 2) TO DEVELOP AN INSTRUMENT BY WHICH TO MEASURE THEIR FUNCTIONAL SKILLS AND 3) TO CONDUCT A NATIONAL SURVEY ON ADULT FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCE.

PROBABLY THE MOST WIDELY USEFUL "PRODUCTS" TO COME FROM THE APL PROJECT WERE: 1) THE FOCUS OF NATIONAL ATTENTION UPON THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM OF FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY (OVER ONE-HALF OF THE ADULT POPULATION) AND 2) A FRAMEWORK BY WHICH TO DEFINE AND MEASURE THE PROBLEM, AND, IN TURN, PROPOSE AMELIORATIONS, IF NOT SOLUTIONS. THE FRAMEWORK WAS ONE BY WHICH THE ACADEMIC SKILLS NEEDED BY ADULTS COULD BE TAUGHT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONTENT AREAS IN WHICH THEY WERE USED EVERY DAY SO AS TO ASSURE THAT THESE SKILLS WERE BOTH RELEVANT AND IMMEDIATELY USABLE. THIS STRUCTURE MADE IT MUCH EASIER FOR EDUCATORS TO DEVELOP

MATERIALS, MANAGE RECORD KEEPING AND DOCUMENT PROGRESS TO INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY. FOR ONE OF THE FIRST TIMES, THERE WERE FAIRLY COMPREHENSIVE, COMPREHENSIBLE, CONCRETE, MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES KNOWN TO BOTH LEARNER AND LEARNING FACILITATOR. INSTEAD OF HAVING TO CAST ABOUT FOR IDEAS FOR CONTENT FROM HERE AND THERE, A WORKABLE FRAMEWORK WAS OFFERED. SOME CRITICS HAVE CALLED INTO QUESTION THE IMPOSITION, IF YOU WILL, OF SUCH LABELS AS CONTENT AREAS, ETC. MICHAEL COLLINS, FOR EXAMPLE, IN HIS PAPER ENTITLED "A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CBAE SYSTEMS," COMMENTED THAT THE ESTABLISHMENTS OF "MAJOR CATEGORIES, SUBCATEGORIES, CONTENT AREAS, LEVELS OF COMPETENCE INVOLVES US IN 'EXCESSIVE REDUCTIONISM' ". MY CHIEF RESPONSE IS TO CALL INTO QUESTION IF SOME STRUCTURE IS NOT NEEDED. IMAGINE, IF YOU WILL, A WORLD IN WHICH CATEGORIZATION IS NOT UTILIZED. THE RESULT, IN MY MIND AT LEAST, WOULD BE AN AMORPHOUS, UNMANAGEABLE ENTITY WHICH WAS EVEN LESS MANAGEABLE, TEACHABLE AND DISCUSSABLE THAN THE MALIGNED COMPETENCY CATEGORIES. IT COULD BE COMPARED TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE WHICH, SOME MIGHT ARGUE, SHOULD REMAIN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND NOT BE COMPARTMENTALIZED

INTO PARTS OF SPEECH. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CONTENT AREAS TO BRING MANAGEABILITY AND ORDER TO THE OFTEN AMORPHOUS CONCEPT OF COMPETENCE IS NO MORE LIKELY TO STIFLE THE COMPREHENSIVENESS COLLINS FEARS FOR THAN THE COINAGE OF NEW WORDS OR THE GIVING OF NEW MEANINGS TO OLD WORDS IS STIFLED IN OUR LIVING LANGUAGE BY THE FACT THAT THERE ARE NOUNS, VERBS AND ADJECTIVES! REFERENCES ARE SEEN IN VIRTUALLY ALL CBAE LITERATURE TO THE FACT THAT THE PARAMETERS OF CBAE ARE NOT ENGRAVED IN STONE, CONSTANT, AND SOCIETY-FREE, BUT ARE (OR SHOULD BE) FLEXIBLE AND EVER-CHANGING TO REFLECT THE CHANGES IN THE REAL WORLD AROUND US. COMPUTER LITERACY IS ONE SHINING CURRENT EXAMPLE.

ENOUGH OF THAT FOR THE TIME BEING. A NUMBER OF "CBAEers" CONTRIBUTED TO A RESPONSE TO COLLINS' ARTICLE. THIS RESPONSE WILL APPEAR IN THE WINTER EDITION OF ADULT EDUCATION QUARTERLY.

WHEN I MENTIONED EARLIER THAT CBAE WAS NOT BORN WITH APL, LET ME GIVE YOU SOME CONCRETE EVIDENCE IN THE FORM OF A DEFINITION OF LITERACY PRESENTED BY UNESCO IN 1962: "THE POSSESSION BY AN

INDIVIDUAL OF THE ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS WHICH ENABLE HIM OR HER TO ENGAGE IN ALL THOSE ACTIVITIES REQUIRED FOR EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING IN HIS OR HER GROUP OR COMMUNITY AND WHOSE ATTAINMENTS IN READING, WRITING AND ARITHMETIC MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM OR HER TO CONTINUE TO USE THESE SKILLS TOWARD HIS OR HER OWN AND THE COMMUNITY'S DEVELOPMENT."

A LITTLE LATER IN 1978, ANOTHER DEFINITION WAS WORKED OUT THROUGH A MODIFIED DELPHI PROCESS BY PAUL TAYLOR AND JIM PARKER BEFORE AND DURING THE USOE INVITATIONAL WORKSHOP ON ADULT COMPETENCY EDUCATION HELD IN METAIRIE, LOUISIANA.---"COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION IS A PERFORMANCE-BASED PROCESS LEADING TO DEMONSTRATED MASTERY OF BASIC AND LIFE SKILLS NECESSARY FOR THE INDIVIDUAL TO FUNCTION PROFICIENTLY IN SOCIETY."

THESE DEFINITIONS SERVE A PURPOSE BUT ARE NOT ALL THAT USEFUL AND SPECIFIC IN AIDING IN CBAE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT. I FELT THAT IT WOULD BE MORE USEFUL, PERHAPS, TO TRY TO COME UP WITH A SET OF DESCRIPTORS FOR SOME OF THE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF CBAE INSTRUCTION

FOR PEOPLE WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN CBAE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION. THEREFORE, WHAT FOLLOWS IS A SUBJECTIVE SYNTHESIS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CBAE INSTRUCTION WHICH I SAW AS COMING TO THE FORE IN MANY OF THE MATERIALS I WAS READING ON THE SUBJECT. MUCH CAME FROM THE BOOK BY JOHN BOULMETIS ENTITLED JOB COMPETENCY.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPETENCY-BASED INSTRUCTION

1. THE OBJECTIVES OF INSTRUCTION MUST BE PRESENTED UP FRONT, IN A MANNER THAT FULLY EXPLAINS THE EXIT BEHAVIORS EXPECTED OF THE LEARNERS.
2. THE METHODS AND CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT OF THOSE OBJECTIVES ALSO MUST BE STATED EXPLICITLY.
3. THE INSTRUCTION MUST PROVIDE THE LEARNERS WITH ALTERNATIVE MODES FOR REACHING THOSE OBJECTIVES.
4. THE MEASURES FOR LEARNER ASSESSMENT ARE CRITERION-REFERENCED RATHER THAN NORM-REFERENCED.
5. COMPETENCY-BASED INSTRUCTION IS DEVELOPED AROUND SOME FORM OF JOB OR TASK ANALYSIS.

6. NEEDS ASSESSMENT SHOULD BE HEAVILY EMPHASIZED.
7. A CONTINUOUS EVALUATION-FEEDBACK-ADJUSTMENT CYCLE IS A BASIC PART OF INSTRUCTION.
8. THE INSTRUCTION SHOULD BE INDIVIDUALIZED.
9. THE AMOUNT OF TIME NEEDED TO ACHIEVE A COMPETENCY SHOULD BE VARIABLE, AND ONLY THE CRITERIA OF ACHIEVEMENT SHOULD BE CONSTANT.
10. SOME LEVEL OF AGREEMENT MUST EXIST BETWEEN THE LEARNERS AND THE INSTRUCTOR TO THE DEGREE THAT THESE OBJECTIVES, CRITERIA, AND ALTERNATIVE MODES ARE APPROPRIATE AND ACCEPTABLE.

AS I MENTIONED, MANY OF THE IDEAS WHICH ARE REPRESENTED BY THIS ADMITTEDLY INCOMPLETE LIST CAME FROM JOHN BOULMETIS' BOOK WHICH IS ONE OF THREE IN A CBE FORUM SERIES CALLED PERSPECTIVES ON COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION EDITED BY JIM PARKER AND PAUL TAYLOR AND PUBLISHED BY PITMAN LEARNING. THE OTHER TWO BOOKS IN THE SERIES ARE THE DELPHI SURVEY, WRITTEN BY JIM AND PAUL AND ASSESSING LIFE SKILLS COMPETENCE BY RUTH NICKLE.

I TURN NOW TO:

CBAE: THE PRESENT

MANY OF THE ASSESSMENT TOOLS, CURRICULAR MATERIALS, INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES, MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND WORKING BELIEFS WE PRESENTLY HOLD IN ADULT EDUCATION ARE PRODUCTS OF CBAE PRACTICE AND RESEARCH. A VERY INTERESTING TREATMENT OF THE LATTER CAN BE FOUND IN A STUDY DONE BY DR. JOAN FISCHER OF WORCESTER STATE COLLEGE IN A PAPER TITLED "COMPETENCIES FOR ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND DIPLOMA PROGRAMS: A SUMMARY OF STUDIES AND CROSS-REFERENCE OF RESULTS" CONTAINED IN A BOOK ENTITLED APL REVISITED: ITS USES AND ADAPTATION IN STATES. THE FORWARD TO THE BOOK STATES THAT "BY THE TIME THE FINAL REPORT FROM THIS STUDY (APL) WAS ISSUED IN 1977, TWO-THIRDS OF THE STATES HAD ALREADY DECIDED TO IMPLEMENT SOME FORM OF CBAE."² THIS FACT IS NOT SO SURPRISING CONSIDERING WHAT HAD APPEARED IN THE FEDERAL

²FROM FORWARD TO APL REVISITED: ITS USES AND ADAPTATION IN STATES, ROBERT W. STUMP, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION.

REGISTER TWO YEARS BEFORE. I QUOTE: "BY THE END OF FISCAL YEAR 1975, THE ADULT PERFORMANCE LEVEL (APL) TEST AND OBJECTIVES WILL BE COMPLETED AND AVAILABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION. STATES SHOULD PLAN TO UTILIZE SECTION 309 AND OTHER FUNDS IN SUPPORT OF PROJECTS TO CONDUCT A STATEWIDE LITERACY ASSESSMENT AND TO DEVELOP INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO MEET APL OBJECTIVES. ALSO ENCOURAGED ARE STAFF DEVELOPMENT OR SPECIAL PROJECTS WHICH FOCUS ON THE TRANSLATION OF APL OBJECTIVES INTO CURRICULUM AND TEACHER COMPETENCIES."

AN INTERESTING HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE TO JOAN'S RESEARCH PAPER IS THAT IT WAS FIRST PRESENTED IN 1978 AT THE INVITATIONAL CONFERENCE IN METAIRIE, THE SAME NOTABLE CONFERENCE THAT SPAWNED THE DELPHI-GENERATED DEFINITION OF CBAE.

I HOPE THAT I WILL BE FORGIVEN THIS BRIEF LEAP FROM THE PRESENT BACK TO THE PAST SINCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE COPING SKILLS CURRICULA AND COMPETENCY-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY CONTINUES TO THIS DAY.

ANOTHER AMBITIOUS PIECE OF RESEARCH WAS UNDERTAKEN BY DR. PAUL TAYLOR, CURRENTLY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ADULT EDUCATION AT KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY. ONE OF THE PRESENTATIONS AT THE SIXTH NATIONAL CBAE CONFERENCE HELD IN BOSTON IN EARLY 1982 FOCUSED ON PAUL'S REPORT ENTITLED "THE STATE OF THE STATES FOR CBAE: FISCAL YEAR 1982." "IT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THIS INVESTIGATION TO SURVEY THE STATE DIRECTOR OF ADULT EDUCATION IN TERMS OF CBAE: DEFINITION, COMMITMENT IN THE STATE OR TERRITORY, SECTION 310 FUNDING, EFFECTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECTED FORMAL AND LESS THAN FORMAL FACTORS AND MAJOR CRITICISM."³ IN ADDITION, DATA FROM THE 1981 FISCAL YEAR WAS USED FOR COMPARISON AND DISCUSSION. PAUL WILL BE PRESENTING THIS YEAR'S EDITION OF THE STATE OF THE STATES FOR CBAE AT THIS CONFERENCE. THEREFORE, RATHER THAN BELABOR THE DETAILS OF LAST YEAR'S RESEARCH HERE, LET ME SIMPLY RESTATE PAUL'S CONCLUSION AT

³TAYLOR, PAUL, "THE STATE OF THE STATES FOR CBAE: FISCAL YEAR 1982."

THE END OF HIS STUDY THAT "CBAE IS ALIVE AND WELL IN FISCAL YEAR 1982. WHILE CONTINUING TO WRESTLE WITH IDENTITY PROBLEMS, THE CONCEPT IS SUPPORTED BY AN OVERWHELMING PERCENTAGE OF THE STATE DIRECTORS BOTH IN COMMITMENT TO PROCESS AND SECTION 310 FUNDING OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIAL PROJECTS."⁴

PLEASE ALLOW ME TO ADD A PERSONAL NOTE HERE THAT I AM LIVING PROOF THAT TEXAS IS STILL CONTINUING ITS COMMITMENT TO CBAE SINCE IT IS A 310 PROJECT GRANT THAT IS FUNDING MY HALF-TIME POSITION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS TO REVISE THE STATE'S ADULT EDUCATION CURRICULUM GUIDE. YOU MAY BE SURE THAT THE FINAL PRODUCT, DUE OUT IN JUNE OF 1984, WILL REFLECT A STRONG CBAE EMPHASIS.

THERE ARE TWO ADDITIONAL MANIFESTATIONS OF THE IMPACT OF CBAE THAT I WOULD LIKE TO BRIEFLY ADDRESS IN THIS SECTION ON "CBAE: THE PRESENT." ONE IS THE FACT THAT OF THE NINE EDUCATION PROGRAMS VALIDATED FOR USE WITH ADULTS BY THE FEDERAL JOINT DISSEMINATION

⁴TAYLOR, PAUL, IBID.

REVIEW PANEL, FOUR WERE DESIGNED AS COMPETENCY-BASED -- THE APL PROGRAM, THE NEW YORK STATE EXTERNAL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM, PROJECT CLASS AND PROJECT FLIT. TWO OTHERS CONTAIN ASPECTS OF CBAE SUCH AS LIFE SKILLS. MOST OF THESE PROGRAMS ARE REPRESENTED AT THIS CONFERENCE.

THE OTHER CBAE-RELATED ENTITY I WANT TO NOTE IN THE "PRESENT" TENSE IS THE FEDERAL CBAE NETWORK. BEGUN BY JIM PARKER AND NOW BEING COORDINATED BY DICK EASON, THE FEDERAL CBAE NETWORK AFFORDS ADULT EDUCATORS THE BENEFITS OF THE MATERIALS AND TALENTS OF A NETWORK OF PERSONS INTERESTED IN CBAE. OCCASIONAL PAPERS KEEP THE MEMBERSHIP ABREAST OF CURRENT EVENTS AND RESOURCES. MEMBERSHIP IS NOW CLOSE TO 900, WITH DOZENS OF ADULT EDUCATORS REPRESENTING SEVERAL OTHER COUNTRIES.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE THIRD AND FINAL SECTION OF MY ADDRESS TODAY --

CBAE: THE FUTURE

THERE HAS BEEN A RESURGENCE OF INTEREST IN CBAE AS EVIDENCED BY SEVERAL EVENTS WHICH I WILL BRIEFLY ADDRESS IN THIS FUTURES SECTION.

AFTER NOT IDENTIFYING ADULT EDUCATION AS A NEWSWORTHY TOPIC FOR ALMOST TEN YEARS SINCE THE RESULTS OF THE APL NATIONAL SURVEY WERE ANNOUNCED BY TERREL BELL AND FLASHED ACROSS THE FRONT PAGES OF MOST MAJOR NEWSPAPERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND SERVED AS A HOT TOPIC OF DISCUSSION IN MOST OF THE MAJOR WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINES, "U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT" SAW FIT TO FEATURE THE PROBLEM OF ADULT FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY AS THEIR COVER FEATURE ON MAY 17, 1982. THE 5-PAGE ARTICLE ENTITLED "AHEAD: A NATION OF ILLITERATES?" APTLY MADE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE CONVENTIONAL DEFINITION OF ILLITERACY -- THE INABILITY TO READ OR WRITE A SIMPLE MESSAGE IN ANY LANGUAGE -- WHICH THEY ADMIT HAS VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED IN THE UNITED STATES, AFFLICTING LESS THAN 1% OF THE POPULATION, AND THE TERM "FUNCTIONAL LITERACY." THEY ALLOW THAT THE DISTINCTION IS A NECESSARY ONE BECAUSE "AMERICANS NEED TO BE ABLE TO APPLY READING AND WRITING SKILLS TO INCREASINGLY COMPLEX TASKS. FOR THAT REASON, EDUCATORS USE THE TERM 'FUNCTIONAL' LITERACY AS A GAUGE OF SKILLS NEEDED FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO PERFORM PRODUCTIVELY

IN SOCIETY AS A CITIZEN, FAMILY MEMBER, CONSUMER AND WORKER."⁵

EVEN MORE RECENTLY THAN THAT, ATTENTION HAS BEEN FOCUSED TOWARD FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCE WITHIN THE MORE GENERIC CONTEXT OF ADULT LITERACY THROUGH THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION'S NEW INITIATIVE. ONE MAJOR MANIFESTATION OF THIS INITIATIVE IS THE NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY PROJECT WHICH JUST BEGAN ON SEPTEMBER 30. FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION FOR A 14-MONTH PERIOD, THE PROJECT HAS THREE MAJOR OBJECTIVES. THE FIRST OBJECTIVE IS TO IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY OF DISSEMINATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ENSURE THAT EVERY LOCAL PROGRAM, WHETHER VOLUNTEER, PUBLIC OR CORPORATE HAS ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND ADVICE ON EFFECTIVE ADULT LITERACY INSTRUCTION. THE SECOND OBJECTIVE IS TO CONDUCT SEVERAL SHORT-TERM R & D PROJECTS THAT ADDRESS GAPS IN OUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EFFECTIVE ADULT LITERACY INSTRUCTION. THE THIRD OBJECTIVE IS TO ANALYZE AND REPORT ON THE NATURE AND STATUS OF ILLITERACY IN OUR SOCIETY. THE CONTRACT FOR THE NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY PROJECT

⁵U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, MAY 17, 1982, PPGS. 53-57.

WAS AWARDED TO A CONSORTIUM MADE UP OF STAFF FROM FAR WEST LABORATORY FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA AND THE NETWORK IN ANDOVER, MASSACHUSETTS. THIS COAST-TO-COAST LINKAGE IS FURTHER HINDERED OR HELPED BY A MID-CONTINENT CONNECTION. I AM PLEASED TO BE A PART OF THE NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY PROJECT WORKING AS A STAFF MEMBER 40% OF MY TIME WITH FAR WEST LAB, BUT BASED IN AUSTIN, TEXAS.

ANOTHER FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCY EFFORT WITH WHICH I HAVE BEEN PERSONALLY ASSOCIATED RECENTLY IS AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY'S NATIONAL CENTER FOR REASEARCH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION. CALLED "THE ADULT LITERACY SKILLS REQUIRED FOR TRAINING IN THE WORK PLACE" PROJECT, THE EFFORT IS FUNDED FOR ONE YEAR BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION. THE PROJECT IS LOOKING AT THE ACADEMIC BASIC SKILLS NECESSARY FOR A PERSON TO BECOME READY TO ENTER VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS. AFTER THOSE PRE-VOCATIONAL COMPETENCIES ARE IDENTIFIED; APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS WILL ALSO BE IDENTIFIED AND REVIEWED. A THIRD COMPONENT OF THE PROJECT WILL BE TO EXPLORE AREAS OF

PRACTICE, POLICY AND RESEARCH IN WHICH ADDITIONAL STUDY IS NEEDED.

THE IMPACT OF CBAE HAS BEEN STRONGLY FELT NOT ONLY IN THE MORE CONVENTIONAL ABE SETTINGS AND IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION BUT ALSO IN CORRECTIONS EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND THE MILITARY. TIME DOES NOT PERMIT ME TO GO INTO DETAIL HERE. PLEASE LET IT SUFFICE TO SAY THAT WITH REGARD TO THE MILITARY, TWICE RUTH NICKSE AND I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO FRANKFURT, GERMANY TO READ PROPOSALS FOR COMPETENCY-BASED, FUNCTIONAL BASIC SKILLS AND HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION PROGRAMS FOR ARMY PERSONNEL IN EUROPE. THE ARMY HAS COME UNDER A GREAT DEAL OF FLACK (PUN INTENDED) RECENTLY FOR THE LOW EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF MANY OF ITS RECRUITS. IT SHOULD NOT BE LOST SIGHT OF THAT THE ARMY IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RECRUITS LOW ENTRY LEVELS, YET THEY ARE CALLED UPON TO REMEDIATE THEM AND THEY REALLY ARE MAKING AN HONEST EFFORT TO DO SO IN A FUNCTIONAL, PRACTICAL WAY.

THE IMPACT OF CBAE ON THE GED HAS ALSO BEEN NOTABLE BEGINNING WITH THE 1978 TESTS. ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE FUTURE WILL CONTINUE TO EVIDENCE THE GED'S INCREASING MOVEMENT TOWARD THE

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SKILLS AS CRITERIA FOR GED TEST MASTERY. THE MOST CURRENT GED CERTAINLY REFLECTS THIS PERSUASION AND THE NEW ONE TO BE UNVEILED IN 1988 PROMISES TO CONTINUE THE TREND TOWARD RELEVANCY TO THE GED TAKERS EVERY DAY LIFE EXPERIENCES. BESIDES IMPACT ON CONTENT, DOUG WHITNEY WITH THE GED TESTING PROGRAM AT THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FEELS THAT THE INFLUENCE OF CBAE HAS PERHAPS BEEN THE GREATEST IN FOCUSING THE NEED TO ARTICULATE THE SKILLS REQUIRED TO BE SUCCESSFUL ON THE GED. THIS INCREASED OPENNESS IN LETTING THE GED CANDIDATE KNOW WHAT IS EXPECTED OF HIM/HER UP FRONT IS CONSISTENT WITH COMPETENCY-BASED INSTRUCTION AND EVALUATION.

THE LIFE COPING SKILLS CONTENT OF MUCH CBAE INSTRUCTION HAS NOT BEEN LOST ON THE COMMERCIAL PUBLISHERS AROUND THE COUNTRY EITHER. INSTEAD OF, AS THEY ARE SOMETIMES ACCUSED, TRYING TO CREATE A MARKET WHERE NO FIELD DEMAND EXISTED, THE FIELD CREATED THE DESIRE AND NEED FOR LIFE COPING SKILLS INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND MANY OF THE PUBLISHERS HAVE RESPONDED ACCORDINGLY. SOME OF

THE PUBLISHERS OF THE LARGEST AMOUNTS OF FUNCTIONAL LITERACY MATERIALS ARE REPRESENTED AT THIS CONFERENCE BOTH IN EXHIBITS AND PRESENTATIONS.

JORIE MARK, WHO LEADS THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S CLEARINGHOUSE ON ADULT EDUCATION, PUBLISHED AN EXTREMELY TIMELY ARTICLE IN THE APRIL, 1983 EDITION OF "LIFELONG LEARNING: THE ADULT YEARS," AAACE'S JOURNAL. ONE OF THE NOTABLE EXAMPLES SHE GAVE OF LITERACY ORGANIZATIONS WHICH WILL BE PROACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE WAR AGAINST FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY IS THE COALITION FOR LITERACY. THE COALITION INCLUDES AAACE AMONG ITS TWELVE ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS. A MAJOR ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN IS BEING PLANNED BY THE COALITION TO INFORM THE LAY PUBLIC AND DECISION-MAKERS ABOUT THE DIMENSIONS OF THE ILLITERACY PROBLEM IN THE U.S. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WILL BE EXTENDED FROM COALITION PROVIDER GROUPS TO OTHER GROUPS NEEDING TRAINING AND SUPPORT SERVICES. THE COALITION'S SERVICES WILL COMPLEMENT THOSE PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY PROJECT AND VICE VERSA.

COMPETENCY-BASED ADULT EDUCATION HAS ALSO GAINED MOMENTUM AND STATURE WITHIN OUR NATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION. THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION (AAACE) IS ORGANIZED INTO EIGHT PROGRAM DIVISIONS. EACH DIVISION IS THEN SUBDIVIDED INTO SEVERAL UNITS. ONE OF THE FOUR UNITS UNDER AAACE'S LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMS AND CURRICULA DIVISION IS THE ADULT COMPETENCY EDUCATION (ACE) UNIT. THIS UNIT WAS FATHERED AND FIRST CHAIRED BY JIM PARKER IN 1976. SINCE THAT TIME, THE ORGANIZATION HAS GROWN FROM SIX FOUNDING MEMBERS TO A PAID MEMBERSHIP OF WELL OVER ONE HUNDRED. THE PROACTIVENESS OF ITS MEMBERSHIP IS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT THIS IS THE SECOND NATIONAL COMPETENCY-BASED ADULT EDUCATION CONFERENCE IT HAS SPONSORED OR CO-SPONSORED. THE FIRST WAS LAST YEAR'S SEVENTH NATIONAL CBAE CONFERENCE IN SAN ANTONIO FOR WHICH IT WAS THE SOLE SPONSOR. THIS YEAR, AS YOU KNOW, THE ACE UNIT IS CO-SPONSORING THIS CONFERENCE. THE NINTH NATIONAL CBAE CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA IN MARCH OF 1985. AGAIN, THE ACE UNIT WILL BE A CO-SPONSOR AND ITS MEMBERSHIP MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS. IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE

FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS TO HAVE SERVED AS CHAIRPERSON OF THIS UNIT. JO ANN LA PERLA WILL BE ASSUMING THE CHAIR OF THE ACE UNIT AT THIS CONFERENCE.

IT WILL BE MY PRIVILEGE FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS TO SERVE AS DIRECTOR OF THE LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM AND CURRICULA DIVISION OF AAACE WHERE I WILL DO MY BEST TO REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF CBAE ALONG WITH THOSE OF THE OTHER THREE UNITS IN THIS DIVISION. SINCE THE OTHER THREE UNITS ARE THE COMMISSION ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION, ESL/BILINGUAL EDUCATION, AND TEACHERS OF ADULT EDUCATION, THESE INTERESTS ARE TOTALLY COMPATIBLE WHEN NOT IDENTICAL.

THE FUTURE IS REALLY THE PRESENT. THOSE SESSIONS YOU WILL BE ATTENDING HERE REPRESENT THE FUTURE OF CBAE. I HEARD A QUOTE AT THE MOUNTAIN PLAINS ADULT EDUCATION CONFERENCE THIS PAST SPRING THAT STUCK WITH ME. IT EQUATED THE PAST TO A CANCELLED CHECK, THE FUTURE TO A PROMISSORY NOTE. ONLY THE PRESENT REPRESENTS READY CASH. TO CARRY THE ANALOGY A FEW STEPS FURTHER, I URGE YOU TO "CASH IN" ON ALL THE VALUABLE ASSETS PUT AT YOUR DISPOSAL

VIA THIS CONFERENCE. MAY YOU FIND THAT THE INVESTMENT OF TIME
SPENT HERE WILL AFFORD YOU NUMEROUS RETURNS IN BOTH YOUR PERSONAL
AND PROFESSIONAL FUTURE AND THAT OF THE CBAE MOVEMENT!